

**Confinement and Freedom: A Feminist Exploration of Identity Formation in *Jane Eyre*,
The Yellow Wallpaper and *Wide Sargasso Sea***

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted or submitted for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This study examines how *Jane Eyre*, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* highlight the confinement and liberation themes to interpret the creation of feminist identity. It analyses the way in which the female protagonists meet physical, psychological and social constraints and how they fight to gain sovereignty. By focusing on the comparison of their journeys, this paper reveals how each story questions patriarchal systems and argues against traditional gender roles. The study employs and examines the framework of feminist literary studies to determine how women are imprisoned by societal forces, marriage and gender roles. To illustrate, Jane Eyre struggles to achieve her independence beyond her responsibilities as a governess, the narrator of *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a victim of oppressive medical treatment and a marriage where she encounters her husband's dominance and in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the author reinterprets the narrative of Bertha Mason, demonstrating how colonialism and patriarchy drive her towards downfall.

This analysis also examines how the primary female characters rebel by taking a stand for themselves, acting opposite in silence, minor acts of rebellion and their attempts to regain their autonomy. Overall, the paper portrays that these stories not only describe the struggle of women against power, but, in addition, they empower the practice of feminist storytelling.

Keywords: Identity, Confinement, Freedom, Liberation, Oppression, Women, Struggle.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The subjects of captivity and liberation have always been crucial to feminist explorations in literary texts. Female authors along with male writers have often examined how female voices encountered suppression or restriction through patriarchal structures which constrained their opinions, controlled their movements and formed their identities. In this manner, Literature functioned as a significant platform in which their battles were both captured and questioned. This research explores this function through the selected texts namely, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *The Yellow Wallpaper* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys which altogether portray female protagonists whose individualities are profoundly formed by imprisonment and whose quest of liberation shapes the soul of their stories.

For example, *Jane Eyre* (1847) is a book authored by Charlotte Bronte whose story revolves around the life of a woman named Jane who struggles to achieve her independence in a male-dominated society. For this reason, Jane's ongoing struggle demonstrates how she keeps working on her inner transformation. In particular, the narrative discloses that Jane is not just imprisoned behind four walls, but she is a victim of social restrictions that try to dictate women's roles.

On the same note, in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892), the storyteller's husband keeps her confined in a room to rest and recover. However, this does not help her illness, rather she loses her psychological balance due to isolation and complete confinement. In the end, her struggle to escape physical and mental confinement provides a strong criticism of a scenario of how women's mental health was cared for at that period.

In another novel named *Wide Sargasso Sea*, by Jean Rhys, a society is depicted from the perspective of the protagonist Antoinette Cosway in which she encounters the harsh persecution of colonialism, race and gender inequality. Here, Antoinette not only suffers physical captivity by

those around her, but the profound isolation she experiences from her country and from her marriage to her husband destroys her sanity. This 1966 novel showcases how the protagonist's constant attempts to fight for liberation never fully see the light of hope.

Through an investigation of these three feminist literary works, this paper portrays the ways captivity and liberation are well linked to the method of identity formation for female individuals. Although each writing contains various historical along with cultural contexts, they draw attention to the battles that women experience under structures of dominance and how they stand up for themselves. This study will further highlight how these stories contribute to feminist analysis through pointing out the destructive aspect of persecution along with the significant opportunities for freedom. In the end, the study will showcase how the lead female characters experience different types of confinement, followed by how they seek liberation by handling these constraints in the form of rebellion or protest.

1.1 Literature Review

Literature often mirrors the social along with psychological conditions of women's existence. Throughout history, female figures in literature have been portrayed from time to time as imprisoned by family responsibilities, marriage and social norms. These limitations impose an impact on both their external lives and their personal feelings. Feminist critics argue that these stories represent real struggles that women encountered over various periods and cultures.

In this context, *Jane Eyre*, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* are notable as they describe the narratives of women confronting captivity using different viewpoints on female persecution.

For instance, the novel *Jane Eyre* depicts the story of a poor orphan child who struggles for her freedom by escaping the strict social norms imposed on her. A clear instance of her imprisonment takes place in her childhood at Gateshead Hall when her relatives used to consider her an outsider and make her realize that she was unwanted and unworthy of love. According to the scholar Bernard J. Paris, “[...] her mistreatment at the hands of the Reeds has made her angry, insecure and distrustful” (146). As a result, she calls her aunt "bad," "hard-hearted" and "deceitful" and says her that when she is grown she will tell people that "the very thought of you makes me sick, and that you treated me with miserable cruelty" (148).

However, author Susan Sniader Lanser states that, “At Lowood, Jane must learn to temper her voice [...]” (192). Which is why, Jane has to learn patience and use her inner strength to stay strong in Lowood School. Besides, Jane goes through various form of confinements just because of her position as a poor woman. Here, “Before Rochester's appearance, she was feeling silently rebellious against her woman's lot and was longing to escape her confinement” (Paris 154).

On the contrary, Jane's refusal to be Mr. Rochester's mistress is not just her choice, it is a strong move for self-respect. Here, author Bernard J. Paris agrees with this statement by pointing out that “We have seen Jane driven to rebel against the Reeds and Rochester [...]” (161). Which means Jane's tough journey at Gateshead and Thornfield Hall discloses society's unfair treatment to poor girls, but her rebellious mind and integrity demonstrate women can change their destiny with freedom and moral courage.

On the other hand, the story demonstrates Rochester's ill wife, Bertha Mason as a symbol, not a real person. She is depicted as wild, crazy and reckless but her perspective is suppressed by the author. According to Cornell University's professor Molly Hite, “[...] Bertha is the most marginal sort of character, for although she is absolutely necessary as a function, she must never be heard, in the sense of acknowledged to have made meaningful statements” (Hite 34). Bronte showcases Bertha as a contrast to portray Jane's noble nature. This is why the significance of the *Wide Sargasso Sea* is remarkable as it provides a voice along with a narrative to Bertha Mason.

Here, Jean Rhys revisits the story of Bertha Mason from *Jane Eyre*. “Its protagonist is the same woman whose laugh-" distinct, formal, mirthless," in one of Jane's peculiarly precise descriptions- disrupts Jane's meditations in order to enable the action of Bronte's novel [...]" (Hite 32). In the novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Rhys highlights clearly that Antoinette was a gentle, soft-hearted woman who was mistreated along with being misunderstood. Her husband erases her real identity, by giving her another name, “Bertha”. The author Vève A. Clark justifies this statement by mentioning that, “Rochester has transformed Antoinette into ‘Bertha’ and the narrative technique here replicates madness” (277).

Besides, professor Molly Hite further explains this statement by asserting that, "My name is not Bertha; Why do you call me Bertha?" she asks the man, and he responds, "Because it is a name I'm particularly fond of. I think of you as Bertha," a palpable lie in the context of his first-person meditations, where he always refers to his bride as Antoinette” (40). This means he was lying to her, plus he deliberately renamed her to take away who she really was in her real life and dominate her. Furthermore, “[...] in Rochester's mind "debauchery" is associated with Bertha, whom he loathes” (Paris 155). Here, Victoria University of Wellington's professor Charlotte Macdonald states that, “It is Antoinette who has life, agency, spirit and exercises it outside and against “the

man who hates her” (her unnamed husband, the character we recognize as Rochester)” (61). This explains that even though her husband tries to demonstrate his suppressive activities towards her, Antoinette does not surrender and keeps resisting him.

Thereafter, in the novel, Jean Rhys explains how racism and colonial rules play a part in Antoinette's misery. “As foreigner and colonial, she is both unfamiliar and debased [..]” (Hite 35). On the other hand, the concept of "double colonialism" - how women of color are pushed to the brink of decline by both patriarchy and colonial control - is clearly present in this story. Rochester got married with Antoinette as “[...] her wealth was the reason for the marriage in the first place” (Hite 38). Later, Antoinette’s marriage to her husband was falling apart as disbelief and dominance replace closeness. Which is why, one day Antoinette's caretaker Christophine told her that “A man don't treat you good, pick up your skirt and walk out” (Hite 38). However, when Antoinette got married to her husband, her husband became the owner of her property and after divorce, she would get nothing from her property as her husband would get that. That is why, Antoinette’s marriage to Rochester points out how power works between men and women, along with between white Europeans and the people they colonized.

Here, Author Susan Sniader Lanser adds a new aspect to this statement by mentioning that, “Here blatantly dramatized is the "splitting of the female image" for purposes of domination," [...]” (191). Through this, Rhys strengthens the feminist perspective of captivity, showcasing the way the identities of women are intersected and dominated by male dominance and colonial power.

In *The Yellow Wallpaper*, by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the narrator's madness is not her weakness, it is a stand for gaining liberty. Her husband controls her as if she is a child and does not let her write or do anything productive. According to the journal *Ozark Feminist Review*, “Our heroine wanted to write to retain her sanity. Her ‘kind’ physician-husband forbade it for ‘her own good’”

(Howard et al. 1). “Gilman shows us that in 1892 women were treated as children and had no control over their lives” (Howard et al. 1). Now, the narrator feels fully imprisoned as she has nowhere to go. This proves that by staying in the room, the narrator becomes a victim of the dominance of her husband. According to Professor Delchamps, she is “[...] trapped in a room as a part of his medical treatment” (111). The scholar further says that, “It is a male voice that...imposes controls on the female narrator and dictates how she is to perceive and talk about the world” (108). Besides, “The narrator does want a cure—she just doesn’t want the rest cure” (Delchamps 112). This statement explains that she does not want “rest cure” treatment which treats women like children and prevents them from speaking up or expressing their emotions and ideas. Here, this is a “[...] draconian treatment of “nervous” women (and, more rarely, men), which included a ban on nearly all activity, whether practical or intellectual” (Zaitzevsky 21).

On the contrary, the narrator even “trusts her own opinions about illness more than those of her physician-husband John” (Delchamps 112). Professor Delchamps further explains that, “She wants to cure herself of opposition, of the oppressive attitudes that surround her by resisting her prescription” (113). To add, it represents how women of Victorian period have to struggle against the strict social restrictions that dominated their bodies along with thoughts.

1.2 Research Gap

While numerous studies have highlighted how women are held captive by patriarchal societies, not enough attention has been provided on how women's diverse social and racial identities shape their struggles and journeys towards liberation.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) How do these three stories portray the concepts of confinement and liberation in forming the feminist identity of their female figures?
- 2) Do the main female characters challenge societal constraints to assert their autonomy or remain sufferers of patriarchal structures?

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This research applies three feminist frameworks to critique the ways female identity is imprisoned and freed. In the novel, *Jane Eyre*, Intersectional feminism explores Jane's gender inequality and class-based conflicts. In the short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Psychoanalytical feminism examines the storyteller's oppressed mind. In the novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, postcolonial feminism analyses racial along with colonial persecution.

1.5 Thesis statement

This thesis explores the roles of female protagonists in *Jane Eyre*, *The Yellow Wallpaper* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* to examine how they deal with their oppression and eventually either face confinement or achieve liberation.

Chapter 2: Close Examination of *Jane Eyre*

Charlotte Bronte with *Jane Eyre* gives a pivotal contribution to the Gothic romance of the 19th century whereas it offers a thoughtful critique of the female identity, power and independence against the strict social rules through the framework of intersectional feminism. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of Intersectional feminism points out how numerous sections of identity (such as being a female person, black individual, poor or a part of the LGBTQ community) mix and influence any individual's experiences. In this novel, Intersectional feminism demonstrates the way various types of persecution namely gender-based and class-based interconnect with each other to form the experiences that women go through.

This novel is about the life of Jane Eyre, who is the main character of the story. It depicts how her life is formed by her gender, her position of being a powerless and poorly treated orphan, her economic restrictions and her status in harsh Victorian power structures. In this case, Jane lives her life by struggling with different types of captivity.

Quite to the contrary, the theme of confinement is not the only issue in this story. It also praises the theme of liberation as the main character builds her identity and rebels against all the forces that attempt to dominate her. Besides the story of Jane, there is also a story of a mentally ill wife of Rochester, Bertha Mason who represents the symbol of prison, being trapped in the attic, and being treated inhumanely.

This discussion includes physical and mental imprisonment along with the emancipation of the main character Jane as it also illuminates the character of Bertha Mason.

Physical Captivity

At the beginning of the story, Jane had to live with her aunt Mrs. Reed, after her parents died. During the period she stayed in the Gateshead Hall, her aunt and her cousins would pretend that she was an outsider to them. There she had no other choice, but to cope with brutal treatments and punishment. The incident in the red room is a pure demonstration of her early confinement. The moment Jane takes a stand for herself against her cousin John Reed's bullying, she gets punishment with captivity. All of a sudden, she is imprisoned in a small, cold and dark room. It was in the same place where her uncle died. Jane becomes quite scared to be in this room, locked up, as she is afraid of the dark room and how it relates with death.

There, she was screaming loudly saying, "O aunt! have pity! Forgive me! I cannot endure it—let me be punished some other way! I shall be killed [...]" (Bronte 23). For Jane, this horrific accident draws the starting point of her long-standing struggle against injustice.

Through the lens of intersectional feminism, this punishment mirrors both her gender and her position as an orphan. As Jane does not have any financial support or her own family, she is completely dependent on her relatives, the Reed family, who treat her as a burden. This family think that they can control her according to their will just because she lacks any social power. If her status in society had been better, her protest would not have been encountered such intensity. Besides, in the Victorian times, girls were taught to be compliant, silent and submissive. The moment Jane showcases her rage and stands for herself, she is violating the rules for the way a proper young girl should behave. Through the red room incident, the Reeds push her back to this submissive role. On the contrary, she has been punished for demonstrating strong reaction and vocal protest in opposition to John Reed, her male cousin, who does not get any punishment for showing his aggression. This also discloses the norms of Victorian society, in which male-aggression encounters tolerance, whereas female-assertion confronts harsh punishment.

A while later, Jane is taken to an institution called Lowood School, which was a charitable asylum for underprivileged female children. Jane is subjected to a very tough life in Lowood as the impoverished orphan girls like her are compelled to go through physical sufferings, showcasing the intersection of class as well as gender discrimination.

Some of the cruel treatments that have been practiced in this school are, not providing adequate and good quality food to the girls. Here, the school authority compels these girls to have burnt foods. For example, during Jane's first day, she shares her horrific experience stating, “[...] I devoured a spoonful or two of my portion without thinking of its taste; but the first edge of hunger blunted, I perceived I had got in hand a nauseous mess; burnt porridge is almost as bad as rotten potatoes; famine itself soon sickens over it” (Bronte 67).

Besides, they dress girls in thin clothes on cold winter days and they subject them to a tight schedule. The girls have no choice but to practice strict rules and live in poor circumstances. As Jane clearly describes from the text, “Our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold: we had no boots, the snow got into our shoes and melted there: our ungloved hands became numbed and covered with chilblains, as were our feet [...]” (Bronte 89).

Furthermore, freezing dormitories and hours of religious classes emphasize more on learning discipline, rather than care or support. As a result, due to the negligence of the school authorities, many students frequently become sick and some students even lose their lives when the prevalence of typhus breaks out. Here, the sufferings of these students reveal the cruel and life-threatening side of a system that oppresses people under the disguise of moral teaching.

Being poor along with female individuals, these girls encounter two types of oppression all together. Through poverty, they become powerless in the society whereas through gender, they are expected to be polite and quiet by societal forces. For instance, a cruel master of Lowood named

Mr. Brocklehurst gives an order to the teachers to cut off the hair of a girl who has natural curls and make the girls wear plain dresses as he does not want to instill pride in them. Here, Mr. Brocklehurst notifies, “[...] we are not to conform to nature [...]” (Bronte 95). On the other hand, his own family is seen arriving “[...] splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs” (Bronte 97). This hypocrisy reveals that impoverished girls are compelled to be humble, whereas the rich people can live a comfortable and free life.

Through these cruel conditions, this institution attempts to repress their strong emotions along with desires and instructs them to act like submissive women. In this process, this school has become a medium of not just class-based but also gender-based control. It teaches the impoverished girls to serve other people, not to have a dream for their own self. Besides, this institution’s prime goal is to shatter the girls’ confidence and make them compliant women. They also teach them that becoming a ‘good woman’ indicates suffering silently, going through hardships and demonstrating obedience to the authority. On the other hand, this institution is developed on the basis of class-based inequality. The girls are brought here as they are impoverished orphan children who have no wealthy family to support them. The brutal treatments on the girls are a direct outcome of their poor condition. This showcases that the strict regulations are not about morality, rather they strengthen the class-based hierarchy, proving that the authority perceives these girls as insignificant individuals while rejecting their basic necessities.

On the other hand, even if Jane has not encountered physical imprisonment in the large estate named Thornfield Hall, her condition in the society is still confined. This imprisonment can be depicted through intersectional feminism, that demonstrates how various types of inequalities, such as gender-based and class-based can mix. Within Victorian society, her position as a female

governess is not equal to the servants or the affluent family she serves. As a result, she is trapped in a social 'in-between' condition. Also, her condition depicts the ways her social status captivates her to one of the possible jobs attainable to impoverished educated women in the harsh societal structures.

The most literal example of imprisonment can be seen in an attic at Thornfield Hall where a woman named Bertha Mason (who is Mr. Rochester's wife) is secretly held captive. Her existence is shaped by secrecy, inaudibility and violence while staying imprisoned in that place, which is described as follows: "[...] at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell [...] it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face" (Bronte 446). Here, Bertha becomes a living example of how a patriarchal society can control wealthy Creole women's voices like her that protest against the Victorian societal expectations of white submissive womanhood or do not want to fit in the social systems.

According to the intersectional feminism, Bertha is captivated both for her being as a female individual, her Creole background and her supposed insanity. Her rich white husband has also taken her property, showcasing the way class along with gender intersect with each other. This woman becomes the eventual victim of various, overlapping prejudices like, gender-based, race and class-based which altogether unite to make her helpless and defend her cruel captivity.

Through these incidents, the author illustrates that keeping a woman confined to her home, a room and to charity institutions was a powerful strategy of suppression of the Victorian society.

Mental Imprisonment

At Gateshead Hall, Jane continuously becomes a victim of criticism, bullying and her relatives always make her feel emotionally down. Due to the harsh treatment of her aunt Mrs. Reed and the harassment of her cousin John Reed, the surroundings become so negative that she begins to believe she is worthless and does not belong to them. Here Jane expresses her emotions saying, “I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there [...]” (Bronte 19). Besides, they make her realize that due to poverty and orphan hood, she does not receive enough respect from her relatives. Her cousin John Reed one day says, “You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us [...]” (Bronte 11).

According to the Intersectional feminism, this mental imprisonment reveals how gender-based suppression is compounded by class. Jane’s oppression arises from the particular, intersecting points of being a girl child, who is compelled to passiveness and an impoverished orphan, who is observed as a financial burden. Her gender indicates that she is excluded from the right to resist physically, whereas her poverty indicates that as she has zero financial stability, she is excluded from the admiration offered to the family members. The intersection of these two components increases her powerlessness. The Reed family feels that they have the permission to mistreat her as she carries both the oppressed identities at the same time, making her captivity at Gateshead Hall a straight outcome of this intersection.

Lowood School introduces Jane to a new form of mental imprisonment. Whereas at Gateshead Hall, her feelings were loud along with explicit; this institution teaches her how to control herself, suppress her own powerful emotions and become a calm person. Jane's close companion, Helen Burns influences her to face the punishments patiently without showing any anger, which was the

opposite of Jane's furious nature. Here, Helen says, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and despitefully use you" (Bronte 86). At that time, Jane's whole world revolved around obeying the school's discipline. She works hard to improve her condition, from being first in her class to becoming a teacher at that institution, a huge change is seen in her. The development of her personality over the years has been solely through following school rules, not through rediscovering her inner self. This Lowood period was an essential part in her life which helped her to learn self-discipline, yet it imprisoned her psychologically.

The most evident example of psychological confinement takes place the moment her beloved compassionate guide, Miss Temple has left the school. The moment she left, Jane's adopted 'reason for tranquility' also said goodbye to her, demonstrating that her good behavior was an outcome of the strict discipline from Lowood school, like she was performing there to achieve good results. Her real, emotional soul was held captive throughout these years.

This mental captivity is an evident instance of intersectional oppression. The school's goal targets the protagonist's particular identity in which her gender asks her to be passive and silent, whereas her class asks her to be thankful for cruel training as they do not have any option left. These elements intersect to compel her into a structure which suppresses her passion to form her into a subservient governess, a role that is built for educated along with poor female individuals who accept male dominance and social discrimination without raising an objection.

At Thornfield Hall, her new involvement with Edward Rochester makes her feel more restricted. Even though their love was real and peaceful to Jane, Rochester's deception of Jane into an illegal marriage, while keeping a huge secret from her, highlights a serious psychological captivity. When Jane gets to know about the hidden truth of his wife, she says, "Mr. Rochester, I must leave you"

(Bronte 462). Later, he offers Jane to be his mistress, without being legally married and tells her to ignore social norms. This offer discloses an intersectional power dynamic where as a rich man, Rochester's class saves him from wrongdoing whereas Jane's gender along with lower class cannot protect her, instead they end up making her feel vulnerable. This circumstance puts Jane into a psychological jail as she deeply is in love with him and her consciousness formed by society as well as her own principles do not allow her to accept such proposal.

The struggle in this place reveals the intersection of gender and class. Here, Jane realizes that as an impoverished governess, the society would criticize her more brutally than the rich man, Rochester for committing suchlike sin. This highlights the focus of intersectional subjugation where the people with the least power suffer the most from disobeying societal regulations. Victorian virtues cruelly judged female individuals for sexual misconduct and which is why, Jane would be branded as “fallen woman”, whereas her class indicates that she does not have any strong financial background to survive the following offence. As a result, her reputation would be vanished for becoming his unmarried mistress and this would also leave her with zero legal protection in the future, whereas he as a rich individual would encounter less disadvantages.

She is confined among her love interest and the suppressive expectations of not just patriarchy, but also societal principles. If Jane had agreed to his offer, she would have abandoned her self-dignity as well as her values and emotionally relied on him. Jane realizes that real love would not make her lose self-respect. Although her choice to leave Thornfield Hall seems to be hurting her, it makes her stronger for choosing herself over her feelings. Here, Jane says, “[...] I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself” (Bronte 483).

On the other hand, St. John Rivers' proposal to marry him again highlights a different but similarly unbearable instance of mental captivity. From the moment he exerts constant pressure on Jane, it symbolizes an evident instance of intersectional dominance. He chooses her as she is a female individual, whom he expects to be a passive, self-sacrificing wife and as she is an impoverished woman with few choices, it makes her powerless to his proposal of social stability.

Here, his offer indicates a sense of obligation, not love. He expects a partner who can fulfil the duties of a missionary wife, putting only his works first, ignoring everything, including her identity and he fabricates it as an ethical and religious responsibility to claim her full obedience. He tells Jane that, "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labor, not for love. A missionary's wife you must—shall be" (Bronte 613). This points out the way gender along with class intersect where her gender is used for free labor as his better half, whereas her low-status is used to demonstrate this responsibility as her sole dignified path, depriving her from personal fulfilment. If she gave her consent to this matter, it would have meant that she had to give up her passions and obey his orders for the rest of her life. However, Jane does not accept his offer, instead, she declares her wish to stay honest to her emotions.

The Quest for Liberation

Female protagonist Jane Eyre's story showcases how Jane gains her freedom through her gradual steps towards it, despite facing numerous captivities. Here, Jane does not end up being fragile like the other heroines of her contemporary stories, but rather she creates her own fate. For Jane, the education she receives at Lowood becomes a pathway to independence. By educating herself, she acquires knowledge and self-assurance. She also adopts patience and inner strength through her connection with Helen Burns. Besides, education provides her the crucial equipment to gain

economic self-standing, the respectable opportunity for an impoverished woman to escape the cycle of dependency and conquer the intersecting restrictions imposed by her class as well as gender.

The moment Jane gains the position of governess at Thornfield Hall, her life enters into a new phase. For the first time, she has become financially stable which provides her a taste of freedom. Jane is valued by her employer, Mr. Rochester, even though there is an evident imbalance of power between them. A significant step towards her freedom is seen when she starts to develop feelings for Rochester, she gets to know about Rochester's wife, Bertha and subsequently, she decides to walk away from him in order to respect her self-worth. Her choice strongly portrays an intersectional judgment. She does not choose a life in which her gender would level her as mistress and her impoverished class would leave her making lifelong dependent, yet on a man for whom she has deep feelings.

In this case, even though she knows that she has to go through a painful and heart-breaking situation, she also knows that she is doing it for her own good. Here, Jane tells Rochester, "I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you" (Bronte 386). This statement points out her willpower to shape her identity according to her desire, rather than dedicate herself to a figure which would diminish her self-esteem and morality.

According to intersectional feminism, Jane's rejection also defies the common belief that impoverished women have to rely on affluent men to survive in a society. Her taken step illustrates that real freedom needs resisting the dual oppressions of gender along with class at the same time. As she moves away from Rochester, she encounters the risks of impoverishment, isolation and

death because she leaves everything behind her, yet she claims her authority to freedom, depicting a type of independence which unites gender resistance with class-based conflicts.

After leaving Thornfield, Jane receives shelter from the Rivers family and she gets a marriage proposal from St. John Rivers. Here, Jane perceives that saying yes to his proposal would use her existence as a missionary spouse, disregarding her emotions and freedom as an impoverished unmarried woman and this would indicate a repression of her own identity and, above all, she would end up facing mental imprisonment. Thus, she does not accept his proposal, giving value to her true self over the tyrannical intersection of religious patriarchal systems and class-based responsibility.

Jane improves her financial status when she gets money from her uncle's wealth as an inheritance. This is considered as a critical situation as Jane for the first time secures her own survival independently. Now she has the freedom to make her own decisions. Also, by using this financial freedom, she can overcome the restrictions of her gender roles along with class, by achieving the control to form her life.

Eventually, Jane's return to her past love, highlights that this time their love does not depict captivity, but rather is a genuine love. The moment Jane returns to Rochester, circumstances have been changed. Rochester has become blind; his body has weakened and he has become humbler. Now their connection can be balanced. This time, Jane has returned as an independent woman, not as an impoverished one. Here, she says, "[...] I am my husband's life as fully as he is mine" (Bronte

688). Their marital relationship is founded upon affection and mutual respect. Hence, her journey completes as she has gained both individual freedom and an equal partnership in love.

Through the lens of intersectional feminism, this ending showcases Jane conquering not only gender but also class-based persecution. Through achieving financial stability as well as social position, she attains societal freedom that permits her to rebuild their relationship.

Bertha Mason: The Unheard Woman of Thornfield Hall

Rochester's wife, Bertha Mason, is a sufferer of not just patriarchal, but also colonial forces in the society. Her situation is a classic instance of intersectional feminism, demonstrating the way various types of persecution combine. She encounters oppression both as a female individual and as a white Creole from a colonized place. The label of “mad woman” is just an excuse for locking her away in the attic and disregard her protests. She is presented as a cursed mirror for Jane, even, she had to experience a worse situation due to this marginalization phase. Here, both Jane and Bertha go through the various parts of captivity in a male-dominated society. However, Jane as an English white individual holds the capability to continue to struggle for her independence, whereas Bertha remains in imprisonment and faces inhumanity as she has been victimized by not just gender inequality, but also racial prejudice. Her violent activities like ruining the wedding veil and destroying Rochester's bed symbolize her only possible way to protest against captivity.

However, this story demonstrates her protest as insanity, stifling her narrative and eventually suppressing a woman's voice whose presence defies Victorian norms of white, compliant womanhood.

Jean Rhys later explores Bertha according to her own perspective in the novel named *Wide Sargasso Sea*, delivering a postcolonial feminist critique. In the narrative of *Jane Eyre*, Bertha is

depicted solely through the viewpoint of Mr. Rochester. Furthermore, as Bertha burns to death, the fire destroys Thornfield Hall and also erases the secrets of its past. Here, Jane and Rochester are reunited through Bertha's death as her death takes away the barriers between them. In a patriarchal society, there is a fierce competition between women, where one woman becomes successful, while the other encounters destruction. Jane achieves her success via Bertha's tragic death. Through the portrayal of Jane and Bertha at the same time, the author powerfully showcases both the scopes and restrictions of freedom in the strict gender norms of Victorian society. The dissimilar destinies of the two women deliver a strong portrayal of intersectional theory. Jane's fight against gender-based and class-based oppression, establishes her pathway to freedom. Bertha's battle against gender-based, racial and colonialism, a mix which does not provide such pathways and eventually pushes her to the downfall.

The author showcases that Jane as a poor governess, experiences limited liberation, whereas Bertha a Creole woman does not get her ultimate freedom, depicting the ways race and gender roles intersect to define the destiny of a female individual.

To conclude, the protagonist, Jane Eyre's struggle towards liberation illustrates that gender-based oppression is linked to class and societal position. The freedom she achieved was a combination of both escaping from physical, mental captivity along with gaining equal dignity. Jane's narrative is the proof that real liberation of women claims overcoming numerous forms of oppression at the same time.

Chapter 3: Thoughts on *The Yellow Wallpaper*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a remarkable feminist piece of writing, showcasing the idea of becoming confined, not only physically, but also psychologically, leading to the narrative's protagonist's ultimate journey to tragic escape. The perspective of psychoanalytical feminism is fundamental for analyzing this text. Here, Psychoanalytical feminism refers to a form of feminist approach which applies psychoanalytical concepts, particularly from Freud's, to demonstrate the way unconscious mind along with early life provides an effect on gender roles and shape the persecution of women. Through the framework of this theory, the short story demonstrates how a woman's soul is repressed by the rigid norms of a patriarchal society. This study will examine the narrative within three areas namely, physical imprisonment, psychological confinement and the tragic phase of freedom. Each part will cover how the storyteller's fights mirror psychoanalytical feminist concerns along with the unconscious, desire, suppression and the feminist identity creation in a patriarchal system.

Physical Imprisonment

The storyteller's literal imprisonment in a room alone reveals a clear example of patriarchal control in the narrative. Through a psychoanalytic feminist lens, the room portrays a sign of suppression as it symbolizes the way the storyteller's unconscious desires for liberation are imprisoned by the domestic duties compelled on her.

In this story, the narrator has to stay at the very top of the house according to her husband's decisions. This physical isolation reflects how her husband, as a sign of authority, dominates both her place and her mind. The narrator describes the room stating, "it was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there

are rings and things in the walls” (Gilman 648). This room has barred windows which demonstrates how her soul along with her desires are confined like her body. This mirrors Freud’s notion of repression in which prohibited thoughts are shut away. Here, the bars of the windows portray that the narrator is being held captive. The furniture of the room also strengthens her imprisonment. A bed that “[...] is nailed down” portrays how the storyteller does not hold the control of her life (Gilman 650). She is unable to take decisions to move or alter her condition just like she becomes subjected to her husband's orders. The bed represents a symbol of her compelled stillness like her energy, thoughts and liberation are altogether settled in one space, making her powerless along with unstable inside.

In addition, the room also has yellow wallpaper which portrays her unconscious mind that is troubled, chaotic and repressed by various tiers of control. While becoming disappointed by the chaotic pattern of the wallpaper, the narrator describes, “It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide - plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions” (Gilman 648). Her confusion surrounding the wallpaper showcases that her repressed thoughts are attempting to arise. Her mind seems messy along with disturbed as she does not have the permission to show her true emotions or creativity freely.

According to the psychoanalytical feminist aspects, the ‘rest cure’ process which has been prescribed for the storyteller is not an authentic treatment, rather a method of patriarchal dominance which suppresses her instincts for involving herself in any intellectual activity or work. By compelling her into inactivity, it reinforces her psychological conflict among desire and compliance.

Her husband John strictly trusts the “rest cure” process which was considered a better treatment for women back then. In this process, women were expected not to do anything, such as, no reading, no writing and they were not allowed to see any visitors as well. They were told to rest all the time and doctors believed that this treatment would cure their “stress problems”. However, this method often harms women more than it actually helps.

The room which is meant to help her to get better, ends up trapping her away from the world outside. She does not have the permission to go out and select another room. She says “I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hang-ings!” (Gilman 648). The ideal room she envisions is a complete contrast to her original, confined space. However, her husband does not agree with her opinion. His rejection suppresses her desire, demonstrating the way male authority represses the self-esteem of a woman and makes her feel that she holds zero power with her.

This physical confinement further discloses Freud's concept of repression. The storyteller's creative thinking and liberating inspiration are forcefully oppressed by alienation. As she encounters dismissal on the road to liberation, she starts to portray her suppressed feelings onto the wallpaper. Therefore, this room portrays a mirror of her internal world as she is held captive by both physical surroundings around her and her repressed feelings along with imaginations. According to psychoanalytical feminist perspective, her physical imprisonment reflects how a male individual's dominance delves into the woman's psyche and imposes an impact on her subconscious fears as well as desires. The room where the storyteller has been kept, with its fixed bed as well as barred windows, becomes an evident example of the society's old-fashioned norms that captivate women from finding their potential along with their selfhood.

Psychological Confinement

At the moment the narrator gets physically locked inside a room, she also becomes a victim of being emotionally trapped by the people surrounding her. Here, psychoanalytical feminism demonstrates the ways patriarchal forces dominate both the physical lives of women and their self-identity, fears and unconscious minds.

John is her husband along with her doctor. He illustrates a complete system of male dominance (patriarchal control). He believes that he knows everything that is right for her wife. The narrator is treated as a child by her husband, called by nicknames like “blessed little goose”, while her feelings, anxieties and opinions are completely overlooked.

The narrator’s incapability to express herself openly regarding her sufferings further discloses the way male control suppresses the feelings of female individuals, causing her to doubt her ideas and emotions. Her husband ignores her concerns as ‘nervousness’ or ‘hysteria’, setting medical authority to refuse her real condition and mark her as weak. This incident mirrors the psychoanalytical feminist aspects of Freud’s notion of repression, in which women’s true emotions are covered and driven to the unconscious as her husband interprets her sickness, rather understanding her real condition.

The storyteller accepts this abandonment, disbelieving her understandings and suspecting her feelings are not valid. She says, “I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus - but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition [...]” (Gilman 648).

Due to his emotional neglect, she starts to keep her emotions inside of her. Also, as she cannot express her pain properly, her interest begins to grow with the wallpaper instead. Apart from her husband’s mental control, the lack of empathy from the people surrounding her exacerbates her

loneliness. Jennie, who is her sister-in-law also lives in the house, illustrates a perfect woman that the society wants the storyteller to become. The storyteller thinks she ought to behave like Jennie, even though it signifies suppressing her own true emotions.

In the protagonist's point of view, Jennie “[...] is a perfect and enthusiastic house-keeper and hopes for no better profession” (Gilman 650). As every person surrounding her acknowledges this restricted life, she starts to believe that her own emotions are inappropriate and feels guilty for wanting freedom.

The yellow wallpaper appears to be the key sign of the storyteller’s psychological confinement and her unconscious attempts to escape from male dominance.

Firstly, she is disgusted by the ungraceful and haphazard pattern of the wallpaper, yet after a while, her obsession with the wallpaper grows. From a psychoanalytical perspective, this wallpaper acts as a forecast of her suppressed unconsciousness. The confined woman that she witnessed in the wallpaper, symbolizes her repressed self which is the secret section of her unconscious mind that longs for liberation and voice.

The storyteller explains the wallpaper as movable, shaking and carrying a “woman stooping down and creeping about”. This portraiture reflects her own circumstances of being stuck under the patriarchal limitations. Through a psychoanalytic feminist framework, the wallpaper serves as a picture of her unconscious mind that highlights the reality of her situation, that she is bound, suppressed and hidden under patriarchal domination.

As the story develops, the storyteller’s suppressed feelings are no longer controlled by her conscious psyche. They start to emerge in distorted forms from her subconscious mind. Here, she soon starts to imagine a woman trapped in the wallpaper, who is desperately trying to escape. At first, she explains the figure saying, “[...] I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure,

that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design” (Gilman 650). After that, this figure slowly takes the form of “[...] a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern” (Gilman 652).

In the entire story, the narrator's psychological confinement is highlighted by the absence of autonomy she has in taking her own personal choices regarding her life, her treatment and her identity as a mother and wife. On the contrary, her husband, John's actions seem outwardly caring, yet he is consumed by the idea that his wife's supposed weakness has rendered her incapable of rational judgments. He does not allow her to write or engage herself in any work where she can use her thoughts, which causes her to be completely silenced. Here, she says, “John is a physician, and [...] perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster” (Gilman 647).

As a result, his activities towards her impose a patriarchal assumption that women's perspectives are illogical, hysterical or unessential. Psychoanalytical feminists perceive this incident as the oppression of women's opinions and comprehension. Therefore, the narrator has to write in secret that reflects how women's preferences and their self-esteem are pulled into hidden places of the mind.

Freedom's Tragic Phase

The liberation presented in the story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* is a complex one and has a tragic ending. It is ultimately not recovery or wellness that allows the narrator to achieve her ultimate liberation but a mental breakdown that allows her to break the shackles imposed upon her by her husband and society. The longer she remains in the room the more she becomes fascinated with the wallpaper. When she thinks a woman is trapped in the wallpaper, she becomes adamant in her decision to get her out. She says, “[...] I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but

myself' (Gilman 654). The narrator's growing passion for liberating the woman within the wallpaper symbolizes her internal struggle to free her repressed selfhood and desires.

During the climax of the story, the protagonist pulls the wallpaper off the wall, to free the woman she thinks is trapped within. This occurrence of tearing down the wallpaper points out her unconscious mind's effort to destroy the patriarchal norms that have enslaved her soul. In the last few seconds, when she thinks that she has somehow managed to unchain the trapped woman, she begins to believe that she has also liberated herself. However, the freedom which she has achieved is a psychological breakdown, not a willful, self-conscious liberty. This mental collapse is the tragic end of her quest to freedom, where her unconscious mind crushes the dominance of her conscious self.

The storyteller's freedom is not a victory of healthiness, but a decline into an instability which becomes the merely possible way for her revolt. In this condition, her conscious desires ultimately gain a horrifying type of authority. She is no longer bothered by the surrounding world, her responsibilities as a wife and a mother or by her husband's dominance. The last scene when the narrator crawls across the room, says that "I've got out at last [...]", provides a haunting aspect (Gilman 656). Here, her creeping over her husband demonstrates that her old self has fully been shattered, permitting the repressed section of her mind to take control over her. To add, it is a narrative that holds no positive sign of hope at the end, showcasing a grim picture of what can happen to the oppressed women when no one steps in and the only liberty they can have is self-injurious, which can be perceived through the degradation of a conscious mind.

Hence, the short story *The Yellow Wallpaper* represents the ways the structures of a patriarchal society confine the storyteller's body along with her conscious psyche, compelling her to suppress her real spirit. Her ultimate mental breakdown into insanity is also a demonstration of a symbolic

revolt against domination. By pulling off the yellow wallpaper from the wall, she breaks the traces of her persecution and liberates her imprisoned soul within her through a tragic end.

Chapter 4: An Interpretive Exploration of *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Wide Sargasso Sea by Jean Rhys serves as the prequel to the novel, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte which explores a deeper analysis of the issues of racism, colonialism, identity and the hardships that women experience. The novel profoundly examines the life of the main character, Antoinette Cosway, depicting the way she constructs her sense of self by using the framework of postcolonial feminism. Here, developed by the collective work of leading theorists, Postcolonial feminism refers to a theoretical perspective which investigates how colonialism and racism impose an impact on women's lives in previously colonized communities. Via the lens of this theory, the novel illustrates the way female protagonists like Antoinette encounter double marginalization such as, through patriarchal persecution and through colonial control. Therefore, Antoinette's selfhood is continuously formed by her gender, race along with her status within a colonized Jamaican society through the story's core themes of both physical and emotional confinement, her battle for acknowledgement and identity and quest for liberty.

Physical Imprisonment

Wide Sargasso Sea novel firstly showcases the colonial oppression through the protagonist, Antoinette's physical along with societal isolation.

In the first pages of this novel, Antoinette is depicted as a child from Jamaica who has lived in the Coulibri estate since the demolition of slavery. Here, her family fights to live with the leftovers of the once-prosperous plantation. The Cosway plantation house, Coulibri estate at one time constructed on slavery, falling apart today and encircled by suspicion from the earlier enslaved people, representing the decline of white colonial dominance.

Furthermore, Antoinette's isolated state arises from the colonial power structures. Since she is a Creole woman in Jamaica, the black Jamaican people do not fully accept her because they consider her family as previous tormentors. Also, the white European people reject Antoinette because they consider her as racially impure. This double alienation portrays the way gender, colonial identity and race intersect which is a key concern of postcolonial feminism.

On the contrary, Antoinette's feelings of being trapped become even more intense after her marriage. Her husband considers her as a share of a financial exchange, not his own better half. He considers this marriage as a 'bargain', stating, "[..] after all is it such a bad bargain?" which mirrors not just patriarchal dominance but also colonial oppression because he uses his position as a white English man to control a Creole female individual along with her wealth (Rhys 64).

Eventually, her husband confines her in the attic that symbolizes the cruel violence of colonial male domination. Being an English man, he both suppresses a rebel woman and dominates a Creole dependent, restating the similar dominance earlier applied by the colonizer people over the colonized individuals.

Emotional Confinement

Although Antoinette is already experiencing physical confinement, even more so is her emotional suffering.

Antoinette's husband symbolizes British colonizing control that occupies her personal world, dominating her wealth, voice and selfhood. He does not regard her as a whole person with her thoughts, desires and independence. Rather, he treats her as though she were an exotic prize from the colonies which is beautiful but inferior that replicates the way the British people consider Caribbean Black people.

When Antoinette initially expresses her decision not to get married with her husband, the morning before their wedding, her husband gets very angry. He says that, "I did not relish going back to England in the role of rejected suitor jilted by this Creole girl" (Rhys 71). His statement expresses racial superiority as he cannot tolerate abandonment from a Creole woman just because he acknowledges her as socially lesser than him.

On the contrary, Antoinette's helpless appeal to him for authority and protection in an arranged marriage mirrors her fears stemming from her childhood trauma. However, her husband cleverly manipulates her with his words and convinces her to marry him. Since Antoinette is in a state of helplessness and has no other alternatives, he assures his financial along with societal stability, restating the method of colonial seizure from the island for his personal advantage.

Giving Antoinette a new name, Bertha is a move of colonial deletion where through changing her name into an English one, he erases her Caribbean identity as well as displaces it with the one which seems appropriate to the dominance of his culture. Postcolonial feminism describes this action as the intersection of both colonial and patriarchal control, in which giving a new name to her is the way colonial and patriarchal power function at the same place to erase her sense of self. Antoinette's emotional captivity starts through this linguistic violence.

Antoinette's husband starts to doubt Antoinette at one point and his suspicions are further fueled by racist stereotypes that the Creole females are mentally unbalanced as well as immoral, demonstrating the way colonial prejudice breaks down trust.

For instance, Daniel Cosway sends a letter to him where he gives a warning regarding Antoinette's family history of mental illness. As a result, he trusts the words of the letter, instead of trusting his own wife which showcases the way colonial stereotypes form his decisions. From then on, he

begins to disbelieve Antoinette, his hatred for her intensifies and he starts to behave against her accordingly.

One day, she tells her husband what is the reason for his hatred and alienation towards her. Her husband does not directly give her a proper answer and avoids her queries. Then, the worried Antoinette, with the help of Christophine (who is her servant and close companion), gives her husband a love potion, however ironically the potion sends her husband to the bed of their maid, Amelie. Having a physical relation with their maid is her husband's cruel step of betrayal that entirely crushes Antoinette. She becomes psychologically devastated as after confronting her husband, she gives him a threat with a broken bottle in her utmost rage as if she would harm him. After that, Antoinette's husband tries to keep her distant from the individuals who might help her, particularly Christophine.

On the contrary, Christophine condemns Antoinette's husband for Antoinette's uncontrolled condition and charges him for attempting to break her up by calling her different names. Christophine even tells Antoinette's husband to leave Antoinette and she can take care of her. Here, Christophine states that, "She, Christophine, would take good care of Antoinette [...]" (Rhys 144). However, Antoinette's husband does not accept her advice and disallows Christophine to interfere between them. Also, he dismisses her as her Black female agency frightens his colonial dominance, suppressing her signifies suppressing local wisdom along with resistance.

A period of racial discrimination, loss of belongings, plus, her husband's dominance pushes her towards insanity which is not only a consequence of patriarchal, but also colonial violence. Eventually, she becomes a mad woman. But, her madness is not only a disease, it is the outcome of her constant psychological confinements.

Liberation

When Antoinette's voice has been repressed, Christophine becomes a sign of resistance on behalf of her, taking a stand against not just colonial but also patriarchal control.

Being a black Caribbean woman, Christophine confronts Antoinette's husband and talks directly about the rights of Antoinette. She wants Antoinette to leave her husband, move on, live freely and her guidance defies colonial and patriarchal dominance as she encourages Antoinette, a colonized Creole female to reclaim her freedom from her English husband who controls her. Here, Christophine tells Antoinette's husband, Antoinette will "[...] marry with someone else. She forget about you and live happy" (Rhys 144).

Through a lens of postcolonial feminism, Christophine's resistance depicts the way black Jamaican women oppose not only white male colonizers, but also patriarchal norms which suppress them. Though Christophine gives Antoinette a proposal to escape, colonial rules along with racial discrimination yet tie her up to her white English husband, demonstrating how colonized females do not have real independence even when they choose to revolt.

Antoinette's last action of starting the fire becomes the obvious declaration of her quest to liberation. In Charlotte Bronte's story, *Jane Eyre*, the character of Bertha Mason's setting fire to Thornfield Hall is portrayed as an act of madness and destruction. However, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* reinterprets the incident as Antoinette's last act of authority. By taking the keys in hand, unlocking the door and holding a candle, Antoinette decides to rebel against her white English husband's colonial dominance and gender-based control that imprisoned her. Here, she says, "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do" (Rhys 171).

When she burns the house down, she demolishes the physical sign of not just her patriarchal, but also her colonial domination as she finally claims control over her life. The fire represents destruction coupled with rebirth as it also finishes Antoinette's torments, marking the starting point

of her spiritual independence. This act of violence shapes her ultimate resistance against a world which imprisoned her due to her race, gender and colonial position.

In the end, by showcasing the story of Antoinette Cosway, Jean Rhys provides a voice to the repressed character, Bertha Mason of *Jane Eyre*. According to postcolonial feminism, this reconstruction challenges the stories that portray Creole women as insane and repulsive. Here, *Wide Sargasso Sea* frees Antoinette by demonstrating her experiences through her own viewpoints and re-establishing her lost selfhood.

Therefore, narrating the story of Antoinette becomes an impactful act of liberation, not only for Antoinette but also for other women who were marginalized by the colonial and patriarchal forces.

To conclude, *Wide Sargasso Sea* is the story of a Creole woman, Antoinette, who is incarcerated by unjust rules regarding race and gender. She becomes trapped in a miserable marriage and in a cruel colonial society. She achieves her freedom through a tragic action of revolt. Ultimately, the book portrays her life not just as a sufferer, but also as a powerful journey towards liberation and identity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The concepts of captivity and liberation explored within the context of a feminist approach in two novels, *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and one short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper* are discussed in this paper. It highlights how the main female characters struggle to achieve their self-identity within the patriarchal society that sets rigid constraints upon them. Not only are these characters physically imprisoned in these stories, but they also become victims of emotional confinements whereas the struggle to gain freedom demonstrates the control of social structures, cultural norms and gender inequality.

The novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte is the story of a woman called Jane who experiences physical restraints and mental captivity repeatedly. Her existence as an orphan and a governess have to conform to the rigid social conventions forced upon a woman, the class structure and the orders of the men who hold power. However, later on Jane manages to obtain her freedom due to her strong will, intelligent mind and her strong spirit. In addition, she does not receive this freedom in one day, instead, she attains it gradually. The evidence of the actions she has taken in getting her freedom is her decision to leave Thornfield Hall when Rochester attempts to subject her, reject St. John's proposal and to go back to Rochester when they are on equal terms. The narrative of Jane demonstrates that the real liberation is a matter of both inner and outer liberation, which means breaking oneself free from the confinement, rediscovering her self-esteem and self-worth.

In the short story, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, the captivity of the storyteller is primarily psychological. In this case, she becomes a victim of the old traditional rules of patriarchy and the power of her husband. Because of this, she is unable to write about her feelings, express her emotions or do anything productive. This extended form of confinement worsens her mental illness to the level of

mental degradation. The only way she ultimately liberates herself is by tearing off the wallpaper and standing up for herself. However, the narration highlights the terrible outcomes of the extreme imprisonment. Eventually it portrays how the act of enforcing rigid societal rules on women to keep them silence destroys their strength.

In the novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the main character, Antoinette Cosway encounters both physical and psychological captivity. She is forced to face the trapped life for her racial origins and being a female human being in a colonial world that isolates her further. All the ignorance of her mother, the dominance of her husband over her and the pressure of society on her, have strained her back to a stage that she cannot not defend herself. Besides, the act of burning down the Thornfield Hall was her tragic move. Nevertheless, this is regarded as Antoinette's last effort towards breaking the shackles of captivity and taking revenge on the powers that have continuously held her in bondage.

There is a certain pattern that these three narratives maintain which includes, women's identity being affected and suppressed by social norms, complicated family relationships and patriarchal control. On the contrary, when the lead female characters go through the confinements, they always strive to liberate themselves. Here, the stories altogether also showcase that freedom does not merely involve escaping the barriers that hold a person physically. It is concerned with achieving psychological emancipation, re-identifying the values and taking a stand for oneself against the forces which dominate women. Hence, though their journey seems hard yet their efforts towards gaining independence is a strong and essential move for establishing equality in the society.

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